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ABSTRACT

In recent years the study of work and family issues has expanded from a focus on men's unemployment, women's employment, and two-career couples to more complex issues of economics, structural and psychological characteristics of work, enactment of multiple roles, the work/family cycle, combined effects of partners' work role characteristics, and family-oriented personnel policies. This study was conducted to clarify links between job conditions, work/family interferences (conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon which has both structural and psychological components), and family outcomes, and to identify those aspects of the work environment that are most highly associated with work/family interferences. The Work and Family Questionnaire was administered to 120 women and 93 men employed as clerical staff, managers, and scientists in an industrial firm employing 2,500 workers. The findings suggest a significant relationship between supervisor sensitivity and work/family interferences. Job characteristics were found to affect psychological spillover, parenting, and job interference. The data revealed no significant main effects for work/family interference variables by gender and parental status after controlling for age, personal and family income, education, job position, and spouse work hours. Neither sex nor parental status were significantly associated with reports of personal interference, job interference, marital interference, or psychological spillover. (Contains 37 references.) (NB)

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EMERGING FACTORS IN WORK/FAMILY INTERFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

Today's workforce and workplace are experiencing increased demands from both job and homelife. The Work and Family Questionnaire was used to assess work/family interference variables in a mid-sized, mid-western business. Results suggest a significant relationship between supervisor sensitivity and work/family interference. Job characteristics were found to affect psychological spillover, parenting and job interference. Need for improved instrumentation, focus on small/mid-sized workplaces, and approaches to business-oriented research are discussed.

Key words:

work/family psychological spillover stress dual-earners

EMERGING FACTORS IN WORK/FAMILY INTERFERENCE

In the last twenty years America has experienced dramatic changes in workforce composition, worktime and stress levels of employees and their families. Some of these changes have been linked to the increasing immigrant population (Johnston & Packer, 1987), capitalism (Schor, 1991), influx of women into the workforce (Economic Report of the President, 1991) and the 'second shift', the work done by women employees once they get home to their own families (Hochschild, 1989). Of these changes, perhaps the most dangerous to the fabric of our society is the "time squeeze", the pressure felt by men and women as they endeavour to balance their work and family life.

The challenges for the future as reflected through the changing demographics of America's workforce are presented in the landmark report *Workforce 2000* (Johnston & Packer, 1987). Demographic data indicate that the cummulative impact of the changes in ethnicity, gender, family structure, race, and age of the workforce will continue to be the driving force for innovations in helping employees balance work and family life. William B. Johnston, in the Workforce 2000 executive summary states that a thorough reform of the institutions and policies that govern the workplace ensuring that men and women have the time and resources needed to invest in their children is essential (Johnston & Packer, 1987).

Ever since the report became public, employers all over the nation have begun examining the impact of the workplace on family functioning. Yet, existing work environments are outmoded and do not in fact adequately serve to meet the needs of the workforce. While only 11.2% of all current American families fit into the mold of a traditional family with only a male breadwinner, the organization of all major institutions and corporations is predicated on this model being the predominant one (Lee, 1991). Support for this hypothesis is

found in the fact that labor force participation of women with children below the age of 6 grew from 47% in 1980 to 90% in 1990. And for women with children 6 to 17 years, the numbers grew from 59% to 75% in the same decade (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1992).

The interdependence of work and family roles has been clearly demonstrated (Galinsky & Hughes, 1987; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980; Voydanoff, 1989). Studies in this field continue to throw light on the numerous and complicated issues related to the balancing of family and work life (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Greenhaus, 1988; Gcogins, 1989; Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Hughes, 1989; Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980; Voydanoff, 1989). Researchers have examined the relationship of specific job characteristics such as work hours, work scheduling, job demands, and job autonomy to individual outcomes such as work/family overload and strain and stress, and ill-health (House, 1981; Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983; Karasek, 1979; Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1978).

Thus the study of work and family issues has expanded from an initial focus on men's unemployment, women's employment, and two-career couples to more complex issues of economics, structural and psychological characteristics of work, enactment of multiple roles, the work/family cycle, combined effects of partners' work role characteristics, and family-oriented personnel policies (Greenhaus, 1988).

In the book, *The Second Shift*, Arlie Hochschild accurately identifies that *'We need to contest the rules of the workplace if we are to modernize. This redesign would be nothing short of a revolution, first in the home and then at places of work - universities, corporations, banks and factories'* (Hochschild, 1989). Research has indicated that industrial companies traditionally resist work-family related innovations (Friedman, 1983). Industrial managers tend not only to be

conservative in outlook but more preoccupied with increasing profits. Most employers have yet to recognize that impacting the bottom line (productivity and profitability), is only possible when work and family issues are addressed.

If the tensions and stresses between work and family are to be resolved, it may be more satisfactory and rewarding to modify the work environment rather than the family. This is being recognized by progressive employers. Unfortunately, to date, far more research has examined how productivity is negatively affected by unmet family problems than how it is positively affected by company efforts to solve the problem (Galinsky, Friedman & Hernandez, 1991).

Work family problems affect companies in terms of recruitment, productivity, retention (Friedman, Galinsky, & Plowden, 1993), absenteeism, and turnover (Friedman, 1991; Hofferth, Bayfield, Deich, & Holcomb, 1991). In a number of longitudinal studies, lowered turnover rates have been found to be associated with the implementation of work-family intiatives. For example, in a small textile manufacturing company in the southwest which was experiencing a 40% turnover rate, turnover rates dropped to 7% after the first year of a child-care program. For every $1 spent, the company yielded $6 in cost containment. This is significant when we consider that the average annual turnover rate for all American companies is 13% (Vanderkolk & Young, 1991).

Sources of work-family conflict include stress, pregnancy, child care and elder care (Bond, 1991; Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983; Voydanoff, 1989). Pregnant women employed by family responsive companies were found to be more satisfied with their jobs (75% were more satisfied versus 41% at less accomodating companies), felt sick less often, missed less work, spent more uncompensated time working, worked

later into their pregnancies and were more likely to return to their jobs (Bond, 1991).

The need for these issues to be addressed in ways that are unique to the subculture of the community in which the employees live has been recognized for the past few decades (Goode, 1960). Today, the changes in the workforce and more sophisticated management techniques have brought work/family issues to the forefront. Reconciling the needs of both the workforce and the workplace is a major challenge for the future.

Yet that the future is now. The workforce of the 1990's has specific needs that cannot wait. Most at risk of severe work-family stress appear to be employees with young children, aging parents and teens (Voydanoff & Kelly, 1984; Galinsky, 1987). Surveys have shown both men and women reporting work interfering with family life (32% and 41%) at twice the rates that family interferes with work (16% and 18%) (Galinsky, Friedman, Hernandez, 1991); 59% of employees rate family performance good or unusually good, while 86% give a good rating to job performance (Friedman & Galinsky, 1993). Thus, while family responsibilities may have a negative impact on work, there is more negative spillover from work to family (Friedman, 1991).

Despite recent corporate innovations to promote better integration of work and family life in general, the response of corporate America has not kept pace with the changing dynamics of work and family (Blankenborn, 1986; Bohen, 1984; Bowen, 1988; Bureau of National Affairs, 1986). For years the focus on work-family issues has been marginal and low profile. But it is not a marginal issue and the 2,500 plus companies that have taken the step of incorporating the family needs of their employees are finding out the value of doing so. A recent study substantiates that family responsive policies make a significant contribution to individual job performance and openness to change

(Lambert,1993). It was seen that when workers are supported by their employer, they in turn are supportive of their employer. According to the results, workers can appreciate benefits even if they use them infrequently. Just knowing the benefits are there appears to provide a comfort level workers value.

The cost of not providing work-family assistance permeates through to productivity. Twenty-five percent of employees with children under 12 years-old experience breakdowns two to five times in a three-month period. Such breakdowns are linked to higher absenteeism and tardiness, lower concentration on the job, and less marital and parental satisfaction. In fact, one-third of employees with children spent time worrying about the care of their children on the job (Friedman & Galinsky, 1993).

The biggest predictor of whether a business is a family-friendly business is related to whether they have gone through any major changes which force them to address survival issues (Galinsky, Friedman, & Hernandez, 1991). There is a myth that addressing the work-family issues is only a possibility for large corporations with money to use for such "extra programs". The reality is that small businesses may be at greater risk if they fail to adequately address these issues. However, their size may be an advantage to creating a family-supportive workplace. Unfortunately, there is paucity of research addressing the nature of small business environments.

Sources of work-family conflict need to be addressed in ways that are unique to the geographical region and ultimately the community. The body of research of research available to date has predominantly been conducted in large companies on the east and west coast. There is a need to increase our knowledge base of factors affecting work-family issues in the unique subculture of the midwest.

It is critical for management to view addressing these issues as a way to manage change in the workforce. One-time programs will not cover the need. A shift in paradigms regarding employee-employer relations is in progress and management can either lead or follow. Only when people at work are fully engaged and supported by management will corporations see an increase in the bottom line. Companies that get people to believe they care about them, as well as the numbers, are finding that the bottom line is positively impacted.

The present study attempted to clarify links between job conditions, work-family interference, and family outcomes. Also, to identify those aspects of the work environment that are most highly associated with work-family interference. For the purpose of this study, work-family interference was conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon which has both structural and psychological components. The structural interference component is defined as the process through which the structure of one's roles in the workplace result in the difficulties in coordinating work and family responsibilities (Piotrkowski, 1979). The second component of psychological spillover is defined as the experiences in the workplace that affect the worker's psychological state and manifest themselves in worker-family interactions (Hughes, 1989). The assumption of the present study was that the extent to which individuals experience structural interference and psychological spillover will have a dramatic effect on family functioning.

Hypotheses:

Specific hypotheses for the study were:

1. There would be gender differences in the effects of job characteristics.
2. There would be a difference in the way work-family interference would be affected by job characteristics between parents and non-parents.

3. Job conditions and work-family interference variables would influence marital outcomes.
4. Job characteristics would affect parenting and job interference, and psychological spillover.

PROCEDURE

An industrial firm employing 2500 workers in Minnesota was selected as the study site. This business is one of two companies that are crucial to the local economy. First the personnel department was recruited through personal contact, telephone calls and initial description of the project.

Once support had been established, the personnel officer at that firm was sent copies of the questionnaire. The Personnel Officer was then responsible for making the questionnaires available to a random sample of employees at the managerial and nonmanagerial level. The subjects received the questionnaire through inter-departmental mail and were given stamped, addressed envelopes to mail back their responses without compromising their confidentiality. An incentive of a $3.00 value lunch certificate was provided to each respondent.

The respondents signed a consent form that assured them of confidentiality and that there would be no effects on their performance evaluation at their worksite as a result of their participation. They were informed that their employer would only receive group results which would also be available to them upon request.

Subjects

The sample consisted of women (n=120) and men (n=93) employed as clerical staff (59%), managers (14%) and scientists (27%). They were single, married or living with a partner and 57% had children. The demographic characteristics of the sample are outlined in Table 1. Most family incomes ranged between 15,000 to 50,000 per year. The educational level of the subjects was high

school and above. About 89% of the subjects were married to spouses who were also employed full or part-time. 55% reported that they had at least one child under 18 years of age who lived with them all or part of the time and 30% had at least one child who was younger than 5-years of age.

[INSERT TABLE ONE]

Instrument

The Work and Family Questionnaire, (Hughes, 1989) is designed to identify the links between job conditions, work/family interference, and family outcomes. Work/family interference is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional phenomenon which has both structrual and psychological components. The 84 items focus on job characteristics (e.g., time spent at job), work/family interference variables consisting of structural interference items (e.g., personal interference) and psychological spillover (e.g., negative mood states), and marital adjustment variables (e.g., marital tension) as described below.

JOB CHARACTERISTICS/CONDITIONS

Structural:

Total Work Hours

Frequency of Job Travel

Weekend Work

Psychosocial:

Job Autonomy:

I have a lot to say about what happens in my job.

My job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own.

I am given a lot of freedom to decide how to do my work.

My work is supervised closely.

I have a lot of influence over company and organizational policies that affect my job.

Job Challenge:

My job requires that I learn new things.

My job is repetitious.

I get to do a variety of different things on my job.

My job requires a high level of skill.

I have an opportunity to develop my own special abilities.

Job Demands:

I have deadlines that are difficult to meet.

My job requires working very fast.

I am asked to do an excessive amount of work.

My job requires working very hard.

I have enough time to get the job done.

I am free from conflicting demands that other people make of me.

Supervisor Task Competence:

My supervisor is supportive when I have a work problem.

My supervisor is concerned about the welfare of those under him/her.

My supervisor respects my abilities.

My supervisor is helpful to me in getting the job done.

Supervisor Family Sensitivity:

My supervisor is flexible when I have a personal/family emergency or crisis that I have to take care of.

My supervisor is flexible when I have other family or personal business to take care of (for example, medical appointment, meeting with child's teacher, etc.).

It is easy for me to take time off for personal/family needs.

Job Security:

It is likely I will be laid off from my job in the next couple of years.

It is likely I will be looking for another job within the next two years.

WORK/ FAMILY INTERFERENCE

Structural Interference, Personal:

Because of my job it has been difficult for me to:

Use and enjoy my days off.

Make and keep personal plans.

Have enough time for myself.

Get everything done each day.

Visit with my friends and relatives.

Structural Interference, Job:

Because of my job, it has been difficult for me to:

Get to work on time.

Work overtime.

Accept promotions which might include greater job responsibilities

Do as good a job at work as I could.

Spend as much time with people at work as I would like.

Concentrate on my job.

Structural Interference, Marital:

Because of my job, it has been difficult for me to:

Do fun things with my spouse/partner.

Do as much as I would like around the house.

Spend as much time with my spouse/partner as I would like.

Have the kind of relationship with my spouse/partner that I would like.

Structural Interference, Parenting:

Because of my job, it has been difficult for me to:

Use and enjoy my days off.

Make and keep personal plans.

Get everything done each day.

Visit with my friends and relatives.

Do fun things with my spouse/partner.

Do as much as I would like around the house.

Spend as much time with my spouse/partner as I would like.

Have the kind of relationship with my spouse/partner that I would like.

Spend as much time taking care of my children as I would like.

Spend as must time doing things with my children as I would like.

Have the kind of relationship with my children as I would like.

Get things done for my children (shopping, etc.)

Take my children to places they need to go (haircuts, music lessons, doctors appointments, etc.).

Get everything done without rushing my children.

Psychological Spillover

I have energy for lots of things outside of work.

It is easy for me to relax and put my job out of my mind when I am at home with my spouse/partner.

When I get home after a typical day, I am too tired to do very much with my spouse/partner.

When I am at home I find myself thinking about work and not paying attention to my spouse/partner.

I am angry and irritable with my spouse/partner because of things that happen at work.

MARITAL OUTCOMES:

Marital Tensions:

How often have there been differences of opinion or problems in your relationship about these sort of things in the last three months:

How to spend leisure time.

Being tired.

Irritating personal habits.

Household expenses.

Being away from home.

The amount of time spent with friends.

In-laws.

Marital Companionship:

Please indicate how often you and your spouse/partner have done the following things in the last three months:

Laughed together or shared a joke.

Showed affection toward each other.

Spent an evening just talking with each other.

Did something the other particularly appreciated.

Confided in each other.

Comforted each other.

Marital Happiness:

In general, how well would you say your relationship with your spouse/partner measures up to the kind of relationship you expected when it began?

A great deal better than you expected.

Somewhat better than you expected.

Just what you expected.

Worse than you expected.

Quite a bit worse than you expected.

All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life with your spouse/partner these days?

Very satisfied.

Satisfied.

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Dissatisfied.

Very dissatisfied.

RESULTS

The results from the present study clearly point to the critical role of the first line managers. Managers are being asked to handle these issues daily with little guidance or policy to support them. Once a business has worked through the philosophical questions, training programs and consulting services exist to help develop the policies/programs and train the line managers in their roles. The data from this questionnaire will assist in approaching these philosophic and pragmatic questions. The following is a summary of the data and implications for corporations across the nation.

No sex or parental status differences in work/family interference variables of personal, job, marital and psychological spillover.

Preliminary analyses of the data examined the extent to which gender and parental status were associated with marital outcomes and work-family variables. Analysis of covariance indicated no significant main effects for work-family interference variables by gender and parental status after controlling for age, personal and family income, education, job position and spouse work hours. Surprisingly, neither sex nor parental status were significantly associated with reports of personal interference, job interference, marital interference and psychological spillover. Thus men and women reported similar levels of marital tension, marital companionship, and overall marital happiness. The fact that

parents and non-parents report similar levels of tension and frustration with managing personal time, interference of family demands on job and spending time with spouse/significant other points to the pervading stress that is felt by all workers. Significant correlations are presented in table 2.

Job conditions unrelated to marital outcomes.

The extent to which job conditions, work-family interference variables and marital outcomes were related was examined through multivariate regression analysis. Job characteristics were not found to be related to the marital outcome variables of tension, overall happiness and companionship. Thus the amount of hours worked, travel involved and weekend work did not significantly predict marital outcomes.

Work/family interference variables predict marital happiness and marital tension.

It had been predicted that work-family interference variables of personal interference, job interference, marital interference, parenting and psychological spillover would be related to marital outcomes. Multivariate analysis provided partial support. Work-family interference variables were significant in predicting marital happiness ($F=3.19$, $p<0.01$) and marital tension ($F=6.06$, $p<0.0001$) but not companionship. Work-family variables were most highly associated with marital tension, explaining over 27% of the variance, and least associated with marital companionship, explaining less than 1% of the variance. Looking at the relative importance of different dimensions of work-family interference in predicting marital outcomes, it was seen that job interference (job interfering with personal time) was the strongest predictor of marital tension and happiness. Personal interference was not significantly associated with any marital outcomes. Marital interference (job interfering with time for spouse) was a predictor for marital tension only.

Job characteristics affect psychological spillover, parenting, and job interference.

It was presupposed that the dimensions of work-family interference would be affected by job characteristics and strain. Step-by-step regression analysis yielded partial support. Demographic variables, entered as step 1 did not yield a significant increment for any of the work-family dimensions.

The nine job characteristic variables were entered as a set at step 2 and resulted in a significant increment in explained variance for psychological spillover ($F=3.6$, $p<0.001$), parenting (37%) and job (19%) but not for personal or marital interference.

Supervisor sensitivity significant predictor of work/family interference.

Analysis of variance indicated that supervisor sensitivity was significantly associated with all but one of the work/family interference variables. Supervisor sensitivity was found to be negatively associated with structural interference variables of marital ($F=37.9$, $p<0.0001$), personal ($F=21.4$, $p< 0.0001$), parenting ($F=22.3$, $p< 0.0001$) and psychological spillover ($F=21.7$, $p<0.0001$). It was also found to be negatively associated with the strain variable of psychological symptoms ($F=15.2$, $p<0.0002$) and positively associated with job satisfaction ($F=36.8$, $p<0.0001$). [Table 3].

[INSERT TABLE 2 & 3]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Results from the research support the thesis that employees seem to be most affected by work-family interference variables. Consistent with previous research, the work-family interference dimensions were found to impact the family. One issue that surfaces consistently is that of the importance of a supportive relationship with the immediate supervisor. A company may have an innovative program and model policies but it is up to the supervisor's discretion

how or even if the employee can take advantage of it. The quality of the supervisory relationship is a strong predictor of work-family strain and family outcome.

The research literature andthe results from the present study clearly point to the critical role of the first line managers. Managers are being asked to handle work/family interference issues daily with little guidance or policy to support them. Once a business has worked through the philosophical questions, training programs and consulting services must exist to help develop the policies/programs and train the line managers in their roles.

Work and family issues need not be conflicting or competing forces. Business can best address the issues by promoting a balance, rather than a choice, between work and family. Work and family conflicts also need to be viewed in ways that are unique to the subculture of the community in which the employees live. It is clear that the midwestern work ethic impacts both the perspectives of the employees and their supervisors.

Balancing of work and family can no longer be resolved by the installation of just another "benefits package". It is also clear that both parent and non-parents feel the 'time squeeze'. Thus providing child care arrangements alone does not answer the needs of the employees. With strong evidence pointing to the crucial role of immediate supervisors, a shift in paradigms regarding employee-employer relations must occur. Businesses can either be leaders or followers. When workplaces get their employees to believe that they are cared for as individuals, the bottom line is positively impacted.

LIMITATIONS

In spite of recent interest in measuring work and family issues, there are few instruments that accurately and concisely assess the delicate balancing of work and family. The instrument used in this study was found to require a great

deal of time to administer, respond to and analyze. There was limited generalizability that makes it difficult to use this instrument in different business settings especially those that may be much smaller in size.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our experiences, we recommend that researchers and educators adopt a more comprehensive approach in working with business sites. The present study focused on work-family interference variables which is important, and impacts the bottom line for employers, however, it is critical that employers be approached in a manner that invites their interest and stimulates the opportunity for change. As Galinsky and Friedman have contended, research in work-family issues would be most benfited by a recognition of the positive impact of work-family programs rather than focus on the negative effects of unmet family needs.

There is a pressing need for further investigation of (a) the critical issues that affect the mental and emotional health of employees who adhere to the work ethics of the midwest, (b) the linkages between family responsive policies and work performance, (c) factors affecting productivity in small, mid-sized and family-owned businesses, and (d) differences between large and small companies regarding work/family interference initiatives.

The implications for a renewed emphasis on supervisory level training is crucial for any company wishing to make progress in addressing work-family issues. Based on these findings, we recommend that companies continue to pursue family friendly policies focused on work-family interference dimensions. Successful implementation can be achieved when built around cultivated supervisor sensitivity.

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Table 1: Demographics of the sample [N = 213].

AGE	%	INCOME	%
25 & under	19	15,000 or less	8
26-35	42	15,001 - 30,000	36
36-50	34	30,001 - 50,000	36
over 50	4	50,001 - 75,000	17
		Over 75,000	3
JOB TYPE	%	MARITAL STATUS	%
Clerical	59	Single, never married	20
Managerial	14	Married	69
Scientific	27	Divorced	6
		Living with Partner	4
FAMILY SIZE	%	SPOUSE EMPLOYED	%
1-2 Children	73	Not Employed	11
3-4 Children	25	Employed	89
5 & over	2		
PARENTAL STATUS	%	RACE	%
Parents	57	White	99.5
Non-parents	43	Asian	0.5

Table 2: Correlations between supervisor sensitivity and strutural intereference variables.

Structural Interference Variables	Supervisor Sensitivity
Personal Interference	-0.33
Marital Interference	-0.42
Parenting Interference	-0.42
Psychological Spillover	-0.42
Job Satisfaction	0.48
Psychological Symptoms	-0.29
Job Autonomy	0.51

$p<0.0001$

Table 3: Analysis of variance for six work-family interference variables as a function of supervisor sensitivity.

Variable	F value	Prob> F
Psychological Spillover	21.70	0.0001
Marital Interference	37.99	0.0001
Personal Interference	21.44	0.0001
Structural Interference: Parenting	22.34	0.0001
Job Satisfaction	36.88	0.0001
Psychological Symptoms	15.16	0.001